

JOHN CLARE

Poems chiefly from MS selected and
edited, with a biographical note, by
Edmund Blunden and Alan Porter

THE SHEPHERD

And other Poems of Peace and War
by Edmund Blunden
Awarded the Hawthornden Prize 1922
Third Edition

THE BONADVENTURE

A random Journal of an Atlantic Holiday
by Edmund Blunden
Second Edition

A SONG TO DAVID

With other Poems by Christopher Smart
Chosen, with biographical and critical
preface and notes, by Edmund Blunden

ON THE POEMS OF HENRY VAUGHAN

Characteristics and Intimations with his
principal Latin poems carefully translated
into English verse by Edmund Blunden

ENGLISH POEMS

by Edmund Blunden

RETREAT

by

EDMUND BLUNDEN

*"Cooling of the air with sighs
In an odd angle of the isle."*

The Tempest

RICHARD
COBDEN-SANDERSON
THAVIES INN

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Dedicated
To Three I Love
Mary Clare and John

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POEMS

An Ancient Path

Rosy belief uplifts her spires
Anemone-frail in amaranth air

That never hurts a thing
This river's highway leads us there,
Hear how each crystal crispèd spring
Comes lightfoot down from shepherd shires,
Comes past the stones and roots and briars

To journey with this king
And Honesty on his boat with bales
And bags and barrels laded sails ,
The merry wind knows that white wing !
He sees those steeples, and he hails ,
And we'll go journeying there.

You must be by me, then be gone,
Then through the bush peep like a bird,
And then with arm in mine step on,
And like one in a legend sing,

Or play with an angel word.
The silver bream jumps out of the stream,
Morn's diamonds ding from the blackbird's wing,
And through long glades that gilt wing speeds—
We'll go where this green river leads
And prisms light and bowing reeds

To that sweet town,
With lilies lulled, to that sweet town
Whose airiest tiptoe chanticleer
Gleams on the west wind all the year ,

Belief's our mark, we've crossed the down,
Time brought the eagle—now the dove !
And there's her sparkling belvedere—
Come, my late and early love

Voices by a River

“ WHAT hearest thou ?
That swelling sigh and slow-rebellious moan
Is the weir water talking all alone,
The water, as at dusk through centuries flown,
More audible now

“ Once more thou seest
The sun far off surrendering his tired head
Into the seas of sleep ? his royal red
Shall soon salute the shepherds, comfort spread
Through a clear east.

“ Thou feelest—nothing
But airs dark-fluttering from the bulrush-grove,
Moth-like , and may not evening zephyrs rove ?
Or mist-veil brushed thee, fine as yet was wove
For moonmaid's clothing ”

“ Turn thy dear brow
Full towards me, with thy young strong arm infold,
For I am trapped, on a sudden made centuries old ,
Warm me a little, the mist clings deadly cold
That veils me now ”

A Superstition Revisited

WHILE on the lavender by the door
The rime was gathering chill,
And darkness with a sigh or two
Heard daylight near the hill,

And while the candle drunkenly
Sank, top and tallow aflare,
Flickering bronze on the half-dropt jaw
Of the woman crouching there,

The baby dying in her arms
Seemed yawning for some breath,
And, as he looked in painful wish,
He saw not mother but Death

This Death at first was hollow-eyed,
Deep shadows masked the face
As through the room the crazy light
Tossed blackness and grimace.

But thence with modulation kind
As a honeyed shower steals on
He glistened to that tiny soul,
He smiled and his blue eyes shone.

“Thou art the one,” the free soul sang,
“That camest here with me
No long time since, I’d take thy hand
And go back home with thee.”

Soft and soft they crossed the threshold,
Swiftly had they flown,
But through a garret window sounded
A dreaming, wavering moan ,

“ Loose, loose my hand,” the winged soul prayed,
“ I have here a thing to say ”
A moment, and as mild as moonlight
Hand in hand, away !

The grandmother dream-awakened saw
Jill's baby in the bed .
Cold hands, my pretty ! ah, that dear child !
She knew, the child was dead.

Upon her dreadless eye the form
Faded, and in the thatch
The sparrows roused to the touch of day ,
She went down, lifted the latch

Where Jill, her swart hair torn, was clutching
Creation turned to clay,
And the vain milk to her bare bosom
Still was finding way.

“ They always come,” the old head thought
“ To tell us when they're free,”
And with dry eyes, uncouthly wise,
She clasped her daughter, whose surmise
Defied eternity.

Girl with Shawl

HER arms were like the Nymphs,
Or their white temple in a glen ,
Only to look upon them
Was to catch sight of peace again,
Was to become a light in light,
A wave in wave, a flight in flight

But still this murmuring came .
What was a charm that passing years
Would quite dethrone and darken,
That prayers, nor taunts, nor tears
Could ever save from that recall
When death brings out the poisoned shawl ?

Meanwhile she played her shawl
With beauty's wit, and that rare white
Challenged the rule and system
Of the perpetual night
Which might have closed on Helen's kiss
But surely could not plunder this.

Nature Displayed

I LOVED her in my innocent contemplation,
I felt before the need her consolation ,
Where green-enshrined the spring-well tinkled down
I drank sweet music , the soft shadow brown
Of hazelled purlieus by deer-pastures made
My fancy's ambush Down in the lawny glade
(Hope more than guessed) white sylvandom was
dancing,
The wind-waved bough betrayed the wild sylph
glancing.

Then, pleased I thought, this country, mother of grace,
Was in her sons most fortunate Every place
Half-shadowed, half-disclosed such consonant cares,
One would not haggle which were hers, which theirs :
The church was brother to the chestnut-trees,
The mossed bridge clasped his singing bride, gay
Teise !

From every wall some golden blossom sprang,
Bells, tree-tops, rain and wind in one peal rang

Thrilled and translucent with this ripe concent
I honoured her, but infant truth was pent
In wordless shell, the image of a bird
Waiting the sun-shaft and the magic word.
And on a day it chanced I found, beside
A window where the bee in the tea-rose plied,

Old versemen , honour's wise unjealous Muse
Woke me at last—now not an hour to lose !
These sang my song, fresh as the garden air
That fluttered the dear pages, then and there ,
From *Grongar Hill* the thrush and flute awoke,
And Green's mild sibyl¹ chanted from her oak,
Along the vale sang Collins' hamlet bell,
And Chatterton's ribbles² dinned in the dell ,
While changing *Seasons* hymned one changeless Form,
And the rainbow worshipped with the thunderstorm

O Nature, maker, mother¹ what deep joy
Thus made a wild harp of a sauntering boy¹
O honour, how enthroned by Nature's men¹
I hailed, and listening loved and loved again

¹ Alludes to the ever-charming interpretation of English country atmosphere in Matthew Green's "The Spleen "

"Here nymphs from hollow oaks relate
The dark decrees and will of fate," etc

² Quoted from the Rowley Poems, Eclogue the First Were Chatterton's dramatic and heroic heights absent, his country muse would still astonish with animated, mellow, and spacious scenery. His "ribbles" are a sort of cousin to Milton's "jocund rebecks," which ought not to have been omitted in these lines of gratitude for early poetic delights.

Solutions

THE swallow flew like lightning over the green
And through the gate-bars (a hand's breadth between) ,
He hurled his blackness at that chink and won ,
The problem scarcely rose and it was done

The spider, chance-confronted with starvation,
Took up another airy situation ,
His working legs, as it appeared to me,
Had mastered practical geometry

The old dog dreaming in his frowsy cask
Enjoyed his rest and did not drop his task ,
He knew the person of " no fixed abode,"
And challenged as he shuffled down the road

These creatures which (Buffon and I agree)
Lag far behind the human faculty
Worked out the question set with satisfaction
And promptly took the necessary action

By this successful sang-froid I, employed
On " Who wrote Shakespeare ? " justly felt annoyed,
And seeing an evening primrose by the fence
Beheaded it for blooming insolence.

Recollections of Christ's Hospital

Book, lie you there such borrowed wings
Droop sadly when the morning springs,
And in my heart a spirit sings
 A sunrise air,

An air that links the pride of boys
With elder character and poise,
Playing on hopes and dreams and joys
 I used to share

Now soars the note, now sighs, now booms,
Is blithe as April showering blooms,
Is grave as Bodley's chaptered rooms—
 All calmly blends

To this cool gale that laves my cheek,
And divine morning's rosy streak
Lights up the brows of these who speak,
 Old and young friends.

Sound awakes sight , the secret song
Is panorama free and strong ,
From music's doors like princes throng
 The phoenix hours.

See, those in playing-fields excel,
And crowning action casts its spell
On humble hundreds watching well
 Their heroes' powers ,

And those with no less sinew speed
In many a classic grove or mead,
Longing to bear that torch indeed
 That lights all time

With faith so bright our WOODHAMS burst
Through gusts and sleet to finish first,
And gallant STEVENSON rehearsed
 The antique rhyme

And all in harmonied advance
Were manning for rich circumstance,
And beauty was the ordinance
 Of that dear school

In chime, in hymn, in careful trade,
In sunshine contest, far parade,
In storied pane, and statued shade,
 In honour's rule.

Still through the queenly-gentle land
How many a clear-eyed beaming band
With Oberon's folk strayed hand in hand !
 Past woodcourts dim

Far gates gleamed white , petals and dew
Fell to adorn our Tudor shoes ,
Even wailing winter's foam and ooze
 Was life in limb.

O fading sense ! O swift, as deep,
Departing anthem ! Will must weep ;
Words like consumption's shadows creep
 Though love upsoars ,

Though I would give my best, to tell
Those annals, each fine syllable ,
Perhaps, to-day, some happy bell
 Reveals those doors

Where Lamb once passed, the master soul,
To hear Saint Matthew's sermons roll,
And the young multitude extol
 Kind London's love,

And, echoing fainter, leads away
To those new roofs in Sussex clay
Where nests that pledge of heaven, that ray
 Nought can remove

A Morning Piece

Written in Absence

Lucky and pretty Light ' smiling on me
All this blue rustling morning, may your grace
Call up my joy in every place
Which by your rays I see
My joy ' A starveling prayer and cold ,
There shall be joy a millionfold.

Let your child-gleam visit each twinkling steep
Where still a Corydon loves his fine sheep,
Or still, true labourer, grumbling
As he goes, rattling and rumbling,
The white mill shows the valley how to work,
Hurling his great arms round , but far away
The water-mill, as staunch a patriarch,
Has plunged afresh into the early day
The bold stream thunders through the weir
And music fills the angler's ear.

Some last soft misty swathes, dear Hour, dispel
From lawns that lie beside a sleepier stream,
Till all the fragrant scheme
Of peaceful men who know their flowers as well
As bees do burns rich for the conquering bees.
Then over lattices
Of seagreen glass, and gables full of nests,
The proud eye rests

On the arrowy spire, now like a soaring flame,
As though, God's word being Light, it answered with
the same

My dream, I'll catch you yet , my Light,
Illude no more , light speaks with sight,
And dream Light surely alone discloses
Beside these spires and rills and roses
Melodies as if they grew
Clear as poplars on the view !
Dream ? I am *here* and I am *now*,
But *there* and *then* bedew my brow ,
The twofold air is jewelled with the singing
Of far-off youth, old Whitsun bells are ringing ,
This sunbeam's pearl, this trilling breeze contrive
To give me back those distant dead alive !

The Age of Herbert and Vaughan

THEN it was faith and fairness,
White sun and western wind,
When every moment spoke
The Holy to the mind,
And quickened saints' awareness.

In close and pregnant symbol
Each primrosed morning showed
The triune God's patrol
On every country road,
In bushy den and dimble

And where young Prue was sweeping,
Or giggling at the gate,
Or Tom was scaring crows
Or the dog Em licked the plate,
Or ewe and lamb lay sleeping,

The witness still recorded
Glance, phrase or incident
That appertained to Christ
And by these shows was meant
At once he stood rewarded !

The Wartons

And Other Early Romantic Landscape-poets

MILD hearts ! and modest as the evening bell
That rings so often through your meadow rhyme,
May there be elms and belfries where you dwell,
And the last streaks of day still gild old time !

In the new heaven and true Jerusalem
Can such things be ? That can they ! where you
rove,
The glow-worm shall not hide his elvish gem,
The owl with ghostly wing shall tour the grove.

And when the charms and fairies of the night
Are changed to sparkling dew and morning's choir,
Gazing the vale farms, from some sheep-strown height,
How will you welcome Phœbus' dancing fire !

On ancient arches shall your primrose peep,
On diamond lattices your sunbeam play,
Across shy brooks your little peasants leap,
And peace and innocence divide the day.

Nor shall the shades of poets not be seen
Whom you have loved. Milton in his young prime,
Spenser and Chaucer on the daisied green
Shall join with you and hear May-morning chime

The Complaint

THE village spoke “ You come again,
You left me for a world of men

Tell,
How you feel now my former spell ? ”

And I “ Sweet simpleton, old home—
Much charged, with puzzled heart I come ,
Still,
I think you are the nonpareil ”

At that a breeze, a sigh was heard,
And thus the traveller caught the word,
“ Child,
Love’s just and lovely , love you smiled ,

But was it not my creed and dream
To fit you for a mightier theme ?
Proud
You stepped away to join the crowd.

And since, what hills, what skies you’ve known,
What streets of strength, what speaking stone !
More,
The drama of terrestrial war ,

And love the Atlantis, far and near,
And genius brightening sphere on sphere,
Bounds
That only seemed thought’s pleasure-grounds

Thence come you with this accent dim,
With eyes that gaze till the tears brim ?

I

But look, how small and poor I lie ”

The sunny grass danced on the wall,
The smithy clanged, old Jesse Hall

Flung

His jacket off, and scythed and sung ,

From school the hungry youngsters rushed,
The caravan passed, the mill sluice gushed.

“ Dear,”

I answered, “ all my ways led here ”

The Eccentric

His sleeping or his waking mind
A master might control,
But with what ordinance would he bind
The wilful-wandering soul ?

When all is lamp-lit peace and bloom,
Its pale dismay appears
Walking the wars and flaring gloom
Of charred and riddled years

Amid the mind's mechanic tense
Of every day's account,
The soul allays the pilgrim sense
At some Arcadian fount

In hate's salt sea its Naiad wave
Upbubbles , in the din
Of comic wildfire it stares grave ,
It mocks our discipline,

This corposant, this light indeed
That with its sudden smiles
Makes laughing child or leafing weed
Clear at ten thousand miles !

The Charm

THE voice of innocence I heard
Answering some young frightened bird,
Or perhaps it talked alone
Of the rainbow sign then shown

Then I heard it at the green,
Where they filled their buckets clean,
Where the lame child shouted past
In hare-and-hounds, not least though last

Innocence, your voice ! again
Where a dozen labouring men
Brought their royallest flowers and fruit
To church, I heard—an angel's flute

Thus this heaven-prevailing charm
Came my way by lane and farm
Till it seemed a common thing
Then the unseen bliss took wing.

But some day this joy again
Will come and with such fullness then
That even in smothered holes of homes
Where dusty sunlight scarcely comes,

In ugly brawl or leering lust,
In hopes long left to hopeless rust,
In Meshech mills or Kedar's tents
I'll hear the voice of innocence.

Ruin

BESIDE the lonely tower I gaze for thee,
 O clear-blue-eyed Tranquillity ,
The tower's green tassels wave and beckon me,
And that way hurries the contented bee
 Yet when I come,
To stand in shadow of old martyrdom,
Where stairs uptwisting shatter in the air,
And conscience views blood-streaks and matted ha
The stone skull-eyes look down most drearily,
And poisonous mood floats from the elder-tree
 Where unseen serpents wind
 The eyes look down
Where snouts of tree-anatomies toad-brown
Pierce the green-scurfed pond, and waters lurch
To the submerged fury and fiery-tortured search
Of knife-like shapes, that only famine find.

The Passer-by

THE listless year goes dimly down,
The sun flares low on meadows brown,
And at the low end of the town
The ploughman sits with heavy dreams.

Crouched on the fallen oak alone
With fingers slack he spins a stone,
Thinking of youth and mirth once known,
With friends as nimble as morning-beams,

Who sped with him to this playground,
Now threadbare, dumb and sportless found,
To laugh and leap the free year round,
With bats or rods, in floods or flowers.

The sudden air is loud with those !
He lifts his face by heaven, there goes
A figure whom he surely knows,
His mate. He stares with all his powers :

The figure passes without pause.
He thinks, that was old Ro, that was—
Call him ? recall him ? . . He withdraws,
Flings down his stone, jeers at his heart :

As though that stranger passing now
Would wish to know a lad from plough
With whom some cobwebbed boyish vow
Once ended “ never, never part ” !

An Infantryman

PAINFULLY writhed the few last weeds upon those
houseless uplands,
Cleft pods had dropt their blackened seeds into the
trampled clay,
Wind and rain were running loose, and icy flew the
whiplash ,
Masked guns like autumn thunder drummed the
outcast year away

Hidden a hundred yards ahead with winter's blinding
passion,
The mule-beat track appeared half dead, even war's
hot blood congealed ,
The half-dug trenches brimmed like troughs, the
camps lay slushed and empty,
Unless those bitter whistlings proved Death's army
in the field

Over the captured ridge above the hurt battalion
waited,
And hardly had sense left to prove if ghost or living
passed
From hole to hole with sunken eyes and slow ironic
orders,
While fiery fountains burst and clanged—and there
your lot was cast

Yet I saw your health and youth go brightening to
the vortex,
The ghosts on guard, the storm uncouth were then
no match for you ,
You smiled, you sang, your courage rang, and to this
day I hear it,
Sunny as a May-day dance, along that spectral
avenue

The Resignation

LIVE in that land, fair spirit and my friend,
Which you are wealthy in, where your estate
Ripples in wheat and sunshine without end,
And wood-rides never reach the glittering gate,
 Where fall the nymphal rills
 Down sunny hills ,
 And shepherds there sit playing
 “ Corinna’s gone a-Maying ”—
O ever may your rills like lovesongs run,
And each green height allure some shining One

With that, your cities twinkle through warm miles
Of pastoral blue, and you at one thought move
Where blest bells chant and antique order smiles,
And love peeps down from airy nooks, your love
 Her flowery lattice soon
 Beneath the moon
 May lodge the owl tu-whooping,
 For she’ll have stolen a-wooing,
And where through dragon throats the spring leaps
 clear
Be whispering lest a wide-eyed rose should hear

This was my country, and it may be yet,
But something flew between me and the sun ,
The gnawed reeds blacken, the thinned poplars fret,
Leaves loll, would wake, and with a thrill are gone.

The city faces stare
Across the square
Where the burnt spire of vision
Hangs in hurt indecision ,
They guess strange menace where old safety throve,
That palest face among them was my love.

Early and Late

How fondly still the Grecian form,
 Young, swift and warm
 Is homing here ,
Among our British commonwealth
Of farmyard habit, meadow health,
 And holt and mere !

When morn discerns our lawny green,
 Daphne is seen
 Weeping and wild,
Till wiser Phœbus travelling there
Caresses music from her hair
 With honour mild

The brook below the floodgate swirls
 For Naiad gills
 To talk and play,
And there though chance some labouring-man
Part the dense boughs to dip his can
 They dance all day.

We see our black-faced sheep anon
 All stare as one
 At thickets nigh,
And almost catch the horned and rude
Woodgod at gaze ere satyr-shrewd
 He dodges by

Be apt, lest even while you come
From market-hum
And county trade,
Yon whistling lad should *Mercury* be
And those fine shorthorns, without fee
By him conveyed !

The country year's an Orpheus tune,
In joyous June
All courting dreams,
Till with cold lips and blue he roves
Half-lost by wintry pits and groves
And hoarse grey streams.

For Persephassa then our eyes
With tired surmise
Search thorned wet haze ,
Then there she smiles a-primrosing
Where the flags fly and steeples ring
In Easter rays !

Would you Return?

POPPIES never brighter shone, and never sweeter
smelled the hay,
The town with its steeples looked made of silver all
the way,
Down in the streamy valley like a treasure that town
lay.

Who was not with me there ? who in that crystal air
Hastened not beside me on the springy grass, did not
stare
Miles ahead where those bright tops of mansioned
hope were gems aflare ?

Come then, know again this same knoll we paused upon,
These poplars with their flashing wind, this singing
rill, this silent stone—
The sun pale peering at the shag-haired storm that
swooped on Avalon !

Village Lights

THESE dim-lamped cabins leaning upon the gulf of
oceanic night

Whose gorge is hoarse with storm, whose surge with
a scornful whistling washes over,

Would seem the craziest cockle-shells, if the meteor
gave us a moment's sight,

And still unhaunted on this phantasmal abyss with life
and love they hover

How now, bold mariners ? what fixed star

So certifies you where you are ?

From what magnetic surety grows

This unimaginable repose ?

Who with his sea-hat over his eyes

Defends your keels from the fanged surprise,

And while your banjos and feet are playing

Knows each secret the deeps are saying ?

Kiss now, strum now, heap the coals,

With flowery cordials brim the bowls—

Since none could ever command this dark

Who stared his eyes out like a shark

This we in the whirls, shrill goblins, know,

Awash in fathomless dream's reflow ,

We mapped, logged, watched, thumb'd all the
rules,

Ten times as wise, ten thousand fools

A Favourite Scene

*Recalled on Looking at Birket Foster's
Landscapes*

Hauntest thou so my waking and my sleeping,
Darling of solitude, Arcadian grace,
Round these long stony ruins of absence peeping,
My Naiad, even more, my nymphal race
Budded at once, all, all congenering,
And at one glad look new-rendering
Whatever joy in tree is dreaming, in meadow saunter-
ing, in freshet leaping ?

As in the dance, when this one makes advance,
The other too with answering gesture moves,
I as I hear thee singing would singing near thee
And mate and imitate those spells that endear thee—
Which old Time bowering in thy dell approves,
And spares to do thee wrong,
Himself slow murmuring round, as though new-
found,
Thy fountain-song

Thy spirit self, perfume and dew and breeze
Of unknown birth but lovely, hovers now
Before my sense, that copies as it sees,
And like thee strives to glide and float and bow,
To such a dædal dancer
Would make a faultless answer—

But where's the fresh enchantment ? the serene
Undulant omnipresence of the queen ?
Dear stranger, rarer than Sabrina, stay,
And kindly lead the shepherd's holiday ,
And from thy simple adornings make May-mornings,
For one who stumbles through a thorny way.
Thou ne'er yet hast deserted him,
Who, though his eyes with weeping swim,
Would marvel on thy waters' brim,
And still has misty-bright esteems
Of all thy trances shy and sacred, thy pure streams.

Lament it not as though October gloom
With thunder's glare malign and brutal boom
Struck thy bombarded beauty, when his swarthy
And clownish measures all unworthy
Strive in thy own delight to dance before thee !

There, he cries, the willow dips
Her rainy hair in the falling fount,
And there the silvery songbird sips
And steps on stones whose gems I'll count ;
The frolic wind that ranged too long
The hot hay-field, he sips to-day,
And runs again renewed and strong
To kiss the lasses in the hay ,
The ripple silvers rings on rings
Where one small water-darling springs,
And He that knew how lilies grew
And without beauty's frown outshone
The panoplies of Solomon,

O had He seen this retinue
Of rosy-petalled sauntering joys
That in the water swirl or poise—
Most him who with his blue-zoned mail
Follows the idle kings that sail
In worlds scarce deeper than the glass
Where boding beauty sighs Alas !

*SONNETS AND OCCASIONAL
STANZAS*

“For there is no Help in Them”

SHE lies on that white breast she loves, and well
Studies that mother-face, which is so wise .
Whose rose and primrose heaven unchangeable
Coys on her smile, spring-sunlight-sweet. She lies
Awake, alone, wrapt all in wool, and cold
And burning , light glares down, a roseless—Hark !
Who comes ? she fights to gaze, and half has rolled
Her hurt head round, when there is nought but dark.

She lies in state , the old green looking-glass
Reflects the baby-carriage, where half-hid
A white box holds the joy that is as grass ,
A dull plant droops its dusk One lifts the lid,
Meets the small pearl face, the dark peering eyes,
So disenchanted and so sadly wise

An Annotation

The primrose way to the everlasting bonfire

MACBETH II, 111

Like a puffed and reckless libertine

Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads

HAMLET I, 111.

EMBLEM of early seeking, early finding,
Frailness whose patience stills the moody cries
Of old Time struggling through chaotic skies
Where the lashed sleet-gust foams, buffeting and
blinding,

And then hast been the light in his calm eyes
May after May, a star so dear and mild
That love by the evening bell and thee beguiled
Thinks echo charmed to thy still bell replies ,

Pilgrim, to whom the weaker sort will turn
Their pale looks, and thy pale resolve responds,
Thy paths are peace, they comfort and not burn,
There young Love strolls, old Adage stares in ponds.
With what strange wrong was Shakespeare mocked
when he
So flung thee to the hooves of infamy ?

Trust

TRUST is a trembling thing ,
No glaring champion never overthrown,
No cannon grinning out of catacombed stone,
But a young sparrow that with just-tried wing
On some steep wall-face fluttering goes to cling ;
Or a petticoated child not two years old,
Who with a simple-simulated wrath
Bids some great dog begone out of his path,
 Betwixt abashed and bold.

My pretty fledgeling, flit and light unlamed ,
Can Nature else but love you ? Shrilly berate
That slow old dog, young darling , 'twas foretold
 You should not be ashamed
So speaking with your enemies in the gate.

Night-wind

ALONG the lifted line of sombre green
The sunset bonfire calms in golden space,
The one hedge oak against the splendour seen
Like a squat idol grossly stares at grace.
The white star's come, no witness saw it come,
The music is the night in reed and thorn ,
The young bird doubts and stirs, then nestles home,
That winged dew rustles on

O Vesper-born,
Stiff-necked I stand like that hewn knotty tree,
As if heaven were my halo ! Thy dim span
Seemed scarce from fern to wildebriar , but began
And died ? Thy moment was infinity.
I bowed not, trembled not , as though I were
The carven botch of an idolater.

Ornithopolis

*Suggested by an excellent article, "Starlings in London,"
by Mr Eric Parker, "Spectator," March 6th, 1926*

Not your least glory, many-gloried Wren,
Springs from these birds, that to your immense Dome
When eve grows glassy cold and clear, come home
 From fallow and blue fen ,
Each flying to his mansion overhead,
The guest of genius, sure of man at last,
Though maelstrom roars and wild light volleys vast,
 Each calm and glad abed

Never was covenant nor entente like this,
Which still shall gather confidence and joy ,
Man's city chosen the birds' metropolis,
Whole myriads taken with a fair decoy '
Through tree and chimney-top the news is told,
With loud-tongued gossip of an age of gold.

Cloud-life

Look with what Titan majesty arise
Those sunset shapes, and indolently swift
Pursue a mighty journey through the skies ,
How like embodying thoughts they sway and lift
And intervolve awhile, dislimn and cleave,
Rivals and friends ! each kin, and each alone
They give their genius and again receive,
One glory of rich union marches on.

So calmly flows the ocean air, so clear
The sight has grown, that those bright vapours gleam
Like souls, their rosy bodies move in a dream
And wish intelligent , they draw most near,
About to speak, to music their god-sense,
Their single songs, and full-quiured eloquence

Sonnet

*On Receiving from the Clarendon Press the New
Facsimile Edition of Christopher Smart's "Song
to David," 1763*

THE Song itself ! Thus the bright-templed rhyme
Before the secret-smiling author came ,
Thus stood the page where thus he wrote his name
With instinct of his triumph over time !
It is a mantle fit for such a man,
And humble Fletcher¹ of St. Paul's Churchyard
Knew what perhaps none but a master can
And in his own gift understood the bard

Now Oxford, Time's delight, with joy renews
Whate'er his press achieved of strength and grace
Meet for the symmetry of that great Muse,
And an old friend returns with an old face
Thrice-happy Christopher's evangel light !
In this black ink his love shall still shine bright

¹ The original printer.

The Unquiet Eye

SECRET and soft as a summer cloud that blooms
From hid Hesperides into our skies,
And smiling comes abroad, but no man's eyes
Will watch it till it troops with common glooms,
A fancy, look, floats lustrous into view,
With Eden's god-life on its radiant brow,
Its proud advance proclaims, "The world is new",
The mind half sees, looks thence, again looks—Now ?

But by these deaths, these profanations schooled—
For Beauty is no jealous god, but still
Regards us as less wicked than befooled—
One May-day when the young myth tops the hill,
There pure and patient shall my gaze ascend
To win my heart a glory without end

On the Portrait of a Colonel

G. H. H

WHEN now at this stern depth and shade of soul
I lift my eyes to that most honoured face,
And yearn towards that harmony and whole
Of soldier creed and act and pride of place,
The eye's shrewd humour, the lip's generous grace,
The stirring zest, the power to make and give,
I feel my youth awake afresh and live,
And bugled morning glows and climbs apace.

Some stubborn clouds of conscience stain that prime,
And chilly creeps the muttering breeze, regret,
But still this picture kindles coming time,
And bids me gird myself for crossroads yet
Where through the inhuman tempestings of night
This man's commanding trust will be my sight.

The Chance

MIND and soul a halting brook,
Famished with long burning days,
Meshed with many a bramble-hook
Where befouled the foam-fleece stays ,

Nor must many days go by
Till but one or two dark holes
Cupping their gross liquor lie,
Where hot eyes lamp in dizzy shoals.

But hark ! through time what impulse roars ?
What fire and ice prepare to fall ?
Come, though your torrents burst my shores
To naked havock, hurl them all !

The Doomed Oak

An Imitation of Anatole France

In the warm wood bedipped with rosy day
The huge gnarled oak, the father of his race,
Stoops to the mound his battered battle-array,
And suns himself, a crone in a lone place

His children choked¹ beneath his darkness, he
Swelled his triumphant centuries with the dead,
Sent the sap swirling in strong arm and knee,
And breathed in heaven with his monarchic head.

But now his proudest branches are black bones
That start out dreadfully from his green crown,
And in his shattered bosom garrisons
Of mining grubs have driven their shafts deep
down.

The spring sap comes to aggravate what bleeds
Corrupted from his stagnant bitter flesh,
A whole world in his mossy carcass breeds,
Grey lichen grips him in a rusty mesh

Ever some nerveless timber that drew breath
In him, snaps on him, falls, one louder gust
Could close the centuried business of his death.
Aye, chance, to-day he topples to the dust.

For caterpillars with their emerald rings
Already from his suspect foliage veer ,
A realm of insects lifting sharded wings
Of azure, scurry along his hide in fear.

Since yesterday the swarming bees have quit
Their clay smallholding in his boughs , the clan
Of hornets, struck this morn with panic fit,
Are gone to found a new fort where they can.

A lizard, where the trunk is gashed, darts out
His meagre head , surveys, and doubts , is gone.
O see, night wraps the icy hulk about,
And brings the bisson mildews hurrying on.

A Thought from Schiller

EVENING falls to numbered night
Day succeeds , and dark and light
I journey peering, praying for
The promised city's golden door

Mountains barricade my track,
Cataracts shout their sharp "Go back !"
Up sheer cliffs my hacked path crawls,
My spidery bridge sways over the falls.

Entanglement

THAT shower-silvery grass where the damson-flower
drifted

And the small frog leapt clear as I came,
That songburst when out of the thunder-cloud lifted

The sun sent his pæan of flame,
Those rustlings of wrens in the ivy—dear God,
I saw every leaf of the lane I then trod !

But now the grey age passes by my faint senses

And charm lies wing-shattered or dead ,
No orchard bough blossoms above these steel fences,

The clay-coloured clouds overhead
Neither speak in proud thunder, nor let the sun smile
On the dust-track unsigned mile after mile.

Release

Pour forth, shrill sparkling brook, your deathless
 wave,
Your pretty counterplay of dark and clear ,
Though small your path, no starrier fancies pave
Earth's proudest deeps, nor sunnier nymphs appear
No voice of glory waits you at the weir,
Yet there are eyes to shine with your young force,
And that swift swirl and leap will take the ear
Of some with wonder , though Zambesi hoarse
Burst on them lost in life, you are their watercourse.

This bird who haunts your channels, without change
Might jewel heaven's still waters with blue wing,
Nor should the resting shepherd think it strange
If he saw there your pearl-clad dace upspring,
Or heard these brook-like aspen-branches sing
To airs embalmed with daffodils for grace
To music on , then fear not, trembling thing,
Earthly comparisons , we bless your face,
And find you, luck divine ! rippling through time and
 space

Departure

THE beech leaves caught in a moment's gust
Run like bowled pennies in the autumn's dust
 And topple, frost like rain
Comes spangling down, through the prisms trees
Phœbus mistakes our horse for his,
 Such glory clothes his mane

The stream makes his glen music alone
And plays upon shell and pot and stone—
 Our life's after-refrain,
Till in the sky the tower's old song
Reads us the hour, and reads it wrong,
And carter-like comes whistling along
 Our casual Anglian train

The Escape

IN the stubble blossoms
 A pansy small,
Which I will get and set again
 Beneath my house wall

I took the tiny outlaw
 I gave it sheltered ground ,
In the stubble blooms a pansy now,
 But here no sign is found.

Libertine

IN summer-time when haymaking's there
And master fish leap out of the pools,
I'll take an oak for my easy chair,
Be club and president, ruler and rules

The dew of the dawn there haunts all day,
The silver ripple and willow-wren chime ,
The bee will pass on his gipsying way
And everything dote on summer-time.

If sweet it is to be safe ashore
When the merchantman plunges into the trough,
I think that ambush is sweetness galore
Whence I may study, some furlongs off,

Old ale-faced industry mopping his brow,
Hot shouldering and shaping heap on heap,
While I sit under the church-cool bough
Whose Dryad will peep when she thinks I'm
asleep.

To a Spirit

THE young spring night in all her virtue walks ,
I never knew myself so fallen in love
And she is kind , her eyes reveal it, where
Soft blue she gazes through the windowed woods
Her touch is seraph sense , within it glide
Primrosy coolness, bluebell-trembling shyness,
Violet-benediction , if she speaks,
It is a sigh unbosomed with such music
That far and wide the forests and the farms
Whisper, Arouse , 'tis God

Having this love,
Poor cheating Folly, should I wait on you ?

The Match

IN a round cavern of glass, in steely water
(None yet so comfortless appalled the day)
A man-eel poised, his lacquer-skin disparted
In desert reds and wharfy green , his eyes too
Burned like beads of venom
Beyond the glass the torturer stood, with thrustings,
Passes, grimaces, toothy grins, warped œillades
To this black magic mania's eel retorted
With fierce yet futile muzzle, and lancing darted
In an electric rapine, against the wall
Of glass, or life those disputants of nothing,
So acidly attracting, lovingly loathing,
Driven by cold radii, goblin lovers, seemed yet
The difficult dumb-show of my generation.

The Storm

Sky beyond words ! Elysian-field
In sunset air and blush revealed
To eyes of earth is it so given
To peep at what they dream in heaven ?
What angel dropped her rainbow-flowers
In that horizon blue of ours ?
And that young moon, whence came she now
But from some calm triunion's brow ?

Sky beyond words ! and could it pass
That we should lose the magic glass,
And strain to see through our harsh shroud
Anarchies of whirling, smouldering cloud,
Labouring with engines of black force
To hurl sweet Nature from her course ?
To lean fanged lightnings can it be
Our hopes sprang out for sympathy ?

The Immolation

A Dialogue

It is but open the door of this walled den,
And there wait gleaming majesty and God ,
Only to cease this mechanism of men,
And take one step, one glance upon the road
Uncottage then, desire, arise, dark love,
And in an instant sparkle to those signs ,
There burn the eyes of Constancy above,
On that most ancient brow care leaves no lines

This we have heard, and still might gladly prove,
But in life's anagram of mood engrossed,
Still tracing silhouettes of hate and love,
And grudging consummations planned but lost,
Our souls have fouled the key to that great sight
Enough for us to lantern our own night

Chinese Picture

ASCEND this path, whose stairway windings gleam
With ghosts of light through pine and cedar , rise,
My thought, and gain each mountainous surprise,
Each gulf of breath-like stone where the one stream
Darts down its silver lightning , drink each turn
Of curve and colour, implanted bliss or terror,
Bow to the gods low-housing in the fern
And at death's fox-holes they will outwit error ,
O rise among these fangy roots, these rocks
In sledgy ruin ever edging—strike
Your foot like faith where armed dragon-shocks
Have wrenched the burnt ridge into spur and spike ,
Question no sign , the hermit of the height,
Once you demand his secret, will not grudge your right

The Secret

THE starbeam lights, a touch, a breath,
On a rover in midnight mood,
In rapture with his houseless heath,
Warm furze-perfume, stern mountain-wreath
Of pines, and a water-music beneath,
And shades that lived before Stonehenge stood

That far-sent patient messenger still
Woos him with sigh-soft hand,
Appeals through endlessness until
Response awakes with as deep a thrill
As when dawn's gale of splendour shrill
Storms with young force the general land